

THE PRAYER MEETING

MOTHERLY FAITHFULNESS.

Week Beginning May 6, 1917.

1 Sam. 1:27, 28; 2 Tim. 1:4, 5.

The women of Israel desired no greater honor than to be the mothers of sons. Elkanah, a man of Israel, had two wives. One was Peninnah, who had many children. The other was Hannah, who had no children. She prayed most earnestly to God that He would give her a son, and said she would "give him unto the Lord all the days of his life."

God answered her prayer and gave her a son and she kept her vow to the Lord. As soon as the baby was old enough to be weaned, she took him to the Tabernacle in Shiloh, and with him she took a liberal offering to God. Eli was then high priest.

We can scarcely understand Hannah's reason for taking Samuel when probably only two or three years old and leaving him with the priest. But of two things we can be very sure: One is that it was very hard for her to make such a sacrifice. He was her only child. Another thing of which we may be certain is that she did it because she thought that was the best way to fulfil her vow, the best way to serve God, and the best way to advance the spiritual interests of Samuel. The results fully justified her course. Samuel's whole life was devoted to God in most loyal and efficient service.

Mothers may not be called upon to make such a sacrifice as Hannah made, but every mother should dedicate her children to God and do all in her power to train them for His service. Every Christian mother wants to see her children real, earnest, active Christians, but she does not always remember that she has more to do in making them such than any one else except God himself.

The mother's training of her children is done chiefly in the home. There she has unequalled opportunities for this God-given work, with the richest rewards offered any human being. God puts the child into the mother's hands and leaves it there through the formative period of life because He wants the best possible work done for the child.

There is no creature that comes into the world that is more helpless and remains helpless as long as does the human infant.

The mother, especially in its earliest years, has almost entire responsibility for the child's training and development. She must look after its physical, mental and spiritual welfare.

Mothers do not always realize the value of the health of the child. One of the strange things in life is that it is generally assumed that any mother without any education, training or study of the subject knows how to care for a baby. If the average mother gave as much study and attention, in proportion to its importance, to the care and rearing of her baby as she gives to making a cake, there would be many babies growing to adult age who are now filling untimely graves.

The mother, if she will use it rightly, has a wonderful opportunity for developing the mental life. Here, too, she ought to fit herself by careful study and by the best use of her own practical common sense for this great work. Where it is possible, and the mother is at all fitted to do so, the early mental training should be given by her. No two children are alike in mind any more than they are

in physical features. So each little mind must be carefully studied and developed. No one can have such an opportunity of doing this as the mother has, for she is with the child more and under more varying conditions than anyone else.

But the great work of the mother is that which Hannah recognized, that the child was to be spiritually trained so that he might best serve God. It may sometimes occur that the child must be sent away from home for this training, but this is not God's normal plan. His plan is that the child is to be taught and trained in the home primarily by the mother. There is no one who can and does so impress the heart of the child as the mother. The first love the child feels is for its mother. And where love is it is easy to make an impression. Can anyone conceive of a greater responsibility or a greater privilege than taking the tender heart of a child and moulding in for God?

The mother does mould the child's heart and life far more than she realizes oftentimes. Nothing has more effect upon the child than the mother's life. When she smiles, the child smiles. When she is irritable, the child frets. The mother sometimes thinks the child is too young to take notice of or be affected by what she does, but it is impossible to tell how young the child may be when the mother's character begins to make its impress upon its heart and mind.

Paul tells us that Timothy was trained by his mother, who had been taught by her mother. So it is not surprising that he grew up in the faith.

Mothers can do much to train their children in the home, but they ought not to forget that a very important part of their training is in the house of God. Notice that Hannah did not send Samuel to the Tabernacle while she stayed at home. She went with him. Every mother, so far as it is practicable for her to make her arrangements to do so, should go with her children to Sunday-school and church. In this way by her example she will help them to form habits that will last through their lives.

No greater rewards are given to any of God's people than are those bestowed upon the faithful mother. It is often said that almost every great man in the world had a great mother. She may not have been so recognized by the world, but her greatness was shown in its development in the son.

May every mother have the joy of seeing her sons and daughters great in the kingdom and service of God.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

JESUS THE TRUE VINE.

May 13, 1917.

John 15:1-16.

Golden Text: "I am the vine, ye are branches." John 15:5.

This is one of Christ's most beautiful parables, and one which must have appealed very forcibly to his hearers, who were so familiar with the vine-covered hills of Palestine. The picture is a very simple one, yet its teaching is so great that its full meaning is beyond our conception.

A parable is the use of something that is familiar in the material world to teach a spiritual lesson. In its interpretation it should be remembered that it is usually intended only to teach some one great truth. It is not right to try to make every particular feature of the story teach a lesson. Some things are put into the story to make it complete and satisfactory, and are not intended for anything

else. The main feature of the story is intended to illustrate and teach the truth.

Christ here calls himself the vine, his people the branches, and his Father the husbandman.

The great lesson that he wants to teach is the necessity for the closest union between himself and his people.

He is the great, strong stem of the vine in which flows the life-giving sap. His people are the branches, much smaller than the vine. They are joined to him by a connection of life. They derive all their life from him. If the branches for any reason are not connected with the vine, it will be found that they really have no life, though for the time being they may appear to have life.

Christ, the stem, and his people, the branches, makes a complete vine, which is not only beautiful to behold, but is valuable in its fruit bearing.

The Father is the husbandman who takes care of this vine, giving all needed attention. He cuts off the fruitless branches and casts them out to be burned. These represent those who claim to be followers of Christ, but have no vital connection with him, and so bring forth no fruit. The branches that are really connected with the vine and yet are not bringing forth as much as they ought, He prunes and treats in any way that will make them more fruitful. God uses many providential dealings with His people to make them bear fruit.

The fruit that the Saviour expects the Christian to bear is a life that shall be of real service in the world, especially in bringing others to him.

The branches make the vine appear beautiful to the observer. The stem may seem stiff and ugly and useless to one who does not know its real nature and value. But the vine with its leaf-covered branches is attractive to every one. There are some who, through ignorance, do not know Jesus, and so do not see any beauty in him. But every one sees the beauty of a true Christian life. A young man, who claimed to be a skeptic, professed not to believe in Christ and said that he could answer every argument that had been presented in all the books in favor of the Christian religion. But he said there was just one argument that he could not answer, and that was the beautiful Christian life that his mother had always lived.

Men who are out of Christ look to his followers, and not to him, to see whether there is any beauty in his religion. They cannot understand his divine life and nature, but they can understand a human life.

Another thing about the great, strong stem is that it does not bear fruit. It furnishes the life and the sustenance, but the branches bear the fruit. So Christ does not now live on earth, nor does he labor directly for the salvation of souls. He expects Christians to receive their life and strength and nourishment from him, and then to live lives that shall do good in the world, especially in bringing others to become his followers.

It is a serious thought that, so far as we know, no soul is ever won to the Master except through human instrumentality. Is the Saviour going to say to us that some soul was lost because we did not put forth proper effort to save it?

It is a glorious thought that the Saviour has given us this privilege of bearing fruit in this way. What an honor it is to be put into the world as his representatives, to show to others what his religion is! And the work that he has given us to do is a glorious one. It is his work, but he has turned it over in part to us. It is a wonderful work, because it

means the saving of souls from eternal destruction and to eternal life.

There need be no question about our being able to bear fruit. If we feel that we have not the ability to do the work that Christ gives us to do, all that is necessary is to ask him for the help that we need. He gives a great privilege in this respect. He says that we can ask for anything that we want. He makes only one condition for answering our prayer, and that is that we abide in him. By this he means that we are to have this vital connection with him.

The best evidence that we can have that we have this vital connection is that we are bringing forth fruit. If we are not bearing the fruit of a Christian life, we had better examine and see whether we have any connection with the Saviour. It sometimes happens that a branch may be attacked by an insect enemy, or it may be a cord or a wire has been wrapped tight around it. In either case the full amount of life-giving sap will not flow into the vine. See if some evil affection of the heart or some sinful habit is not strangling the spiritual life. If so, there is need of Christ's help to remove the trouble, and he has promised to give it if he is asked for it.

Our Saviour says that God is glorified if we bear much fruit—that is, He is made to appear glorious to others. When the world sees the Christian bearing the fruit of a godly life, it recognizes the fact that the source of the life that produces that fruit is in God and not in man. So the world sees something of the power and character of God.

Bearing fruit is keeping the commands of the Saviour. He says that if we will do this he will give us special manifestations of his love. He promises to love us with as great love as that with which the Father loves him. Certainly there can be no greater. He says that he has told us this that our joy may be full.

We might expect him to say to us that what he wants in return for his love is that we should love him. Instead of that, he says that what he wants us to do is to love one another. If we love anyone, we are always willing and anxious to do anything that we can for his benefit. Jesus says that this love should be great enough to compel us to make any sacrifice necessary to show our love, even to death itself. That is just what he did for us.

It is a great thing to have a friend. What greater privilege can we imagine than to have Jesus as our friend. This he has promised to be upon the conditions of which he has been speaking. We are to abide in him and therefore bring forth fruit. This fruit is the manifestation of love to others.

We please Christ our Saviour most and serve him best when we love those who need our love and then put our love into actions for their benefit.

Teaching the Lesson.

Teachers of the younger classes in the Sunday-school have found that the lesson can be more satisfactorily taught if it can be visualized in some way. This plan has been found very satisfactory in teaching this lesson.

If the class is large and you have a blackboard, use it. If the class is small and you sit at a table, a sheet of paper will answer. Do not say that you cannot draw. Anyone who can hold a piece of chalk or a pencil can do all that is needed.

While the children are looking on draw a trellis, consisting of about three upright posts. Across these draw three or four rails. Near one end of the trellis start a rather large vine from the ground, run it up and